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Special Memorandum

**Selected Soviet Statements on
Countermeasures Against SDI**

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Introduction

The Soviet posture toward adopting measures to counter the deployment of space-based weapons under the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) underwent little change following the death of Konstantin Chernenko and Mikhail Gorbachev's accession to the post of general secretary in March 1985.¹ In recent months the primary thrust of Soviet propaganda on SDI has been directed toward projecting a positive image of Moscow's arms control policy by focusing on its initiatives to ban the development and deployment of space-based weapons. Moscow has also periodically warned that the deployment of such weapons by the United States cannot be allowed to go unanswered.

Statements by Soviet leaders on the question of countermeasures have generally been limited to broad pronouncements emphasizing that Moscow will not allow the security of the Soviet Union to be jeopardized. Such remarks appear designed to reassure the Soviet public while putting Washington on notice that the USSR has the technology and will to counter any new weapon systems the United States might deploy. Soviet commentary has echoed the leadership's statements while at the same time offering a somewhat expanded discussion of possible Soviet countermeasures.

Soviet scientists and specialists on security issues, both in Soviet media reports and in interviews and articles published abroad, have noted a number of active and passive measures that could be taken to counter space-based ABM systems but have avoided suggestions as to what mixture Moscow might favor. Soviet spokesmen have frequently indicated that any U.S. defense could be effectively countered by increasing the number of Soviet offensive strategic weapons, but they have not ruled out the possibility that a matching Soviet system might be developed.

This *Special Memorandum* provides a selection of statements by Soviet leaders, midlevel officials, scientists, and media commentators since March 1985 on possible responses to the U.S. SDI program.

¹ This memorandum updates FBIS *Special Memorandum* FB 85-10004 of 13 February 1985, "Selected Soviet Statements on Countermeasures Against SDI," which reviews Soviet treatment of the question from March 1983 to February 1985.

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Selected Soviet Statements on Countermeasures Against SDI

Vladimir **Shcherbitskiy**, Politburo member, remarks to correspondents in Washington (*Pravda*, 8 Mar 85)

Let me refer to the so-called Strategic Defense Initiative.... We resolutely oppose plans to proliferate the arms race in space, and this is by no means because the Soviet Union has nothing with which to counter these plans. As Konstantin Chernenko, the head of our state, has said: If we are compelled to do so we will do everything—as was the case on more than one occasion in the past—to safeguard the security of our country as well as the security of our allies and friends.

Vladimir **Tolubko**, deputy defense minister and commander in chief of the USSR Strategic Rocket Forces, interview (Bulgarian newspaper *Rabotnichesko Delo*, 8 Mar 85)

The argument that space weapons will bring more security is an outrageous lie. They can only produce a further escalation of tension in the world and result in a new round of the escalation of the arms race, and on a much higher and more dangerous level. The Soviet Union will never agree to the existing balance of forces being upset and, if necessary, as many times before, the USSR will adopt all measures for the preservation of this balance of forces.

Mikhail **Gorbachev**, general secretary, speech at reception for Polish leader Wojciech Jaruzelski (*Pravda*, 28 Apr 85)

The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty countries seek no superiority either on earth or in space. We are not striving to compete over who will build a higher nuclear fence. However, we shall prevent the military-strategic parity from being upset. This is a common and firm position of the Warsaw Treaty members. If preparations for "Star Wars" go on, we will have no other choice but to take responsive measures, including, of course, the buildup and improvement of offensive nuclear arms.

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Sergey Sokolov, defense minister, interview (*Pravda*, 6 May 85)

If the United States starts the militarization of outer space and thereby undermines the existing military-strategic equilibrium, the Soviet Union will have no other choice but to reply with measures to restore the position.

These could be measures both in the sphere of defensive and offensive armaments. It goes without saying that the USSR will choose the modes of action that best meet the interests of its defensive capability, but not those that the people in Washington might urge it to take.

Stanislav Menshikov, member of the CPSU Central Committee International Department Consultant Group (*Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* No. 5, May 85)

Ballistic missile defense (BMD) can be effective only if the other side sits and waits, taking no countermeasures. Possible countermeasures . . . can be as follows: technological improvements making strategic missiles less vulnerable to any defense "layer"; the development of space weapons; an increase in the number of strategic ballistic missiles; and the development of weapons such as cruise missiles against which the BMD systems now under debate are ineffective.

Sergey Akhromeyev, first deputy defense minister (*Pravda*, 4 Jun 85)

The USSR—and the Soviet leadership has stated this most definitely on several occasions—does not seek military superiority but it will not permit such superiority over it either on earth or via space. The initiators of "Star Wars" should not forget . . . that the "creation of space strike weapons will turn out—and will inevitably turn out—to mean a reduction in the security of both the United States and of its allies.

Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chief of the CPSU Central Committee International Department, interview (*Le Matin*, 10 Jun 85)

[Question] If Reagan made the SDI operational, how would you react?

[Answer] We certainly would not do the same thing. We would respond in a more effective way, first to defend ourselves and then to penetrate their system. But another and even more dangerous stage in the arms race would begin.

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Gorbachev, speech to Dnepropetrovsk metal workers (*Pravda*, 27 Jun 85)

If the Soviet Union is faced with a real threat from space, it will find a way of effectively countering it. Let no one, and I say this quite definitely, doubt this.

Colonel General Nikolay **Chervov**, department chief in the Soviet General Staff, Foreign Ministry press conference (Soviet television, 25 Jul 85)

The Soviet Union is not creating space strike weapons and is not building a large-scale antimissile defense system, nor the basis of such a system. It is strictly implementing the open-ended 1972 ABM Treaty. We propose that the United States join us in this and, while there is still time, abandon its plans for the militarization of space. The Soviet Union is striving to achieve honest accords in Geneva, but, if necessary, we have the means to counter the U.S. line of seeking military supremacy. We have both the economic and intellectual potential to reliably safeguard the security of our country and the entire socialist community.

Yuliy **Kvitsinskiy**, chief Soviet negotiator for space issues at the Geneva arms control talks, Foreign Ministry press conference (Soviet television, 25 Jul 85)

SDI is leading to the militarization of space, which will inevitably give rise to countermeasures by the USSR, including in the area of strategic offensive and defensive weapons. As a result, there will be no elimination of nuclear weapons and no elimination of nuclear missiles, but an arms race running in all directions.

Andrey **Kokoshin**, deputy director of the Institute of the United States and Canada, interview (*Moscow News in English*, 28 Jul 85)

There is no effective defense in the event of a nuclear war and . . . it is practically impossible to develop one. The research done by the Committee of Soviet Scientists, and by many of our counterparts in the West, has many times confirmed this conclusion, especially if one considers the various means of counteracting the space-based ABM.

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As a reminder, these means—both active and passive—include the so-called space mines, obstacles created in the trajectories of combat space vehicles, false missile launchings, all sorts of coatings that reflect the laser beam, etc. We arrived at the conclusion that an effective network of such means can be developed and employed much quicker and to a great extent with already existing technology than the U.S. broad-scale ABM system which lays claim to high effectiveness. And the counteraction system can be built at less expense. In one of the combinations we had analyzed, its cost is, for example, a mere 1-2 percent of the cost of the broad-scale ABM system.

Soviet Defense Ministry booklet ("Star Wars: Delusions and Dangers," Jul 85)

If the United States were to begin militarizing outer space, upsetting the existing military-strategic equilibrium, the Soviet Union would have no choice but to take countermeasures and restore the strategic parity. These measures might concern both defensive and offensive arms.

Editorial article (*Pravda*, 1 Aug 85)

The United States' plans for achieving strategic superiority over the socialist countries and dictating its will to them are destined not to be realized. The Soviet Union and its allies will not allow it. But the problems now facing mankind cannot be resolved on the paths of the arms race.

Chervov, interview (Vienna television, 13 Aug 85)

You know that the USSR lost 20 million people in World War II. The USSR suffered enormous losses and has made tremendous efforts for the reconstruction of its national economy. After all this, is the Soviet Union now to face a new threat unarmed? That will not happen. That will not be permitted by the Soviet people. If the American plans for "Star Wars" are implemented further, then the USSR will have no choice but to respond with measures of its own. These reply measures will primarily concern offensive nuclear weapons, as well as defensive weapons. Our reply measures will be sufficiently effective and will guarantee the security of the USSR and of the other socialist countries. They will be adequate to meet the U.S. threat.

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Gorbachev, *Time* magazine interview (*Pravda*, 2 Sep 85)

If tens of billions of dollars are spent on [SDI] research, no one, obviously, would like to stop half way. And when weapons are ultimately placed in space, the process will get out of hand altogether and we will reach, as I have already said, a situation whose consequences cannot even be predicted.

And you can be certain the other side will not be sitting on its hands.

Talk about a purely research character of the SDI is basically intended to conceal the extensive process of the development of space weapon systems. . . .

Perhaps someone in the United States had decided that there has appeared a possibility to overtake us, to put a hold on the Soviet Union. But this is an illusion. It could not be done in the past, and it cannot be done now. We shall find a response, and an adequate one at that.

Leonid Zamyatin, chief of the Central Committee International Information Department (Soviet television, 7 Sep 85)

Because there is no U.S. proposal on space does not mean that we will endlessly sit and wait and do nothing. We cannot be deceived on this question. Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev said this when he answered the question of a resident of Dnepropetrovsk about what Reagan's "Star Wars" involves. We have stated and do state that we will not give the Americans an opportunity to gain superiority over the Soviet Union, including in this sphere. We will take adequate measures; we will take adequate measures.

Chervov, interview (Bulgarian newspaper *Zemedelsko Zname*, 13 Sep 85)

The Soviet Union, as we have declared on many occasions at the highest level, does not strive for military supremacy either on earth or in space. It is doing everything possible to halt the arms race. However, if the preparations for "Star Wars" continue, then, as M.S. Gorbachev has noted, we will have no choice but to take retaliatory measures, including, of course, the reinforcement and improvement of offensive nuclear weapons.

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Gorbachev, interview with French correspondents (Soviet television, 1 Oct 85)

What will happen if tomorrow the process of the militarization of space starts up, if space strike weapons are created? What should be the logical response of the other side to all of these plans? Well, by no means to start disarming in the sphere of strategic weapons and other nuclear weapons. It will have to seek possibilities for withstanding this challenge.

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